

**GASTON LEVAL**



**ANARCHISTS BEHIND  
(RUSSIAN) BARS (1921)  
&  
COLLECTIVES IN  
SPAIN (1938)**



**PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM**

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE  
'ANARCHIVE'

**"Anarchy is Order!"**

*I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.*

*I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'*

(William Blake)

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism - of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives-a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchive' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the **'principles, propositions and discussions'** of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe

that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**'Anarchy Is Order' does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchive offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*'demons of flesh and blood, that sway  
scepters down here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark  
diseases and wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will-'o-the-wisp of the saddest  
ignorance'.  
(L-P. Boon)*

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us. Don't mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be send to

[A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be)

A complete list and updates are available on this address, new texts are always

**welcome!!**

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## **GASTON LEVAL'S BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Born: 1895, France

Died: April 8, 1978

Pedro R. Piller, born in 1895, went under the pseudonym of Gaston Leval. He was a French anarchist during the Spanish Civil War and was the son of a French Communard. Leval, himself was a French anarcho-syndicalist militant and a participant in the foundation congress of the Red International of Labor Unions from June-August 1921. This all happened in the wake of the third congress of the Communist International, when Leval worked as a delegate from the Spanish CNT. During his time in Moscow, his attention turned to the fate of imprisoned Russian anarchists. Leval was still a young delegate to the Profintern Congress at the time and was granted access to visit Volin in prison. Speaking in flawless French, Volin regaled him for some time with the story of his travels in the Ukraine. Leval soon became a political prisoner himself, after avoiding the draft during the first World War, spending many years in the prisons of Spain Latin America.

# **ANARCHISTS BEHIND BARS**

**GASTON LEVAL**

**(Summer 1921)**

From the upcoming "No Gods, No Masters" edited by Daniel Guerin, to be published by AK Press the summer of 1997

**Once** I discovered that there were so many of our comrades in prison, I arranged, together with the French syndicalist delegates to make overtures to Dzerzhinsky, the People's Commissar for the Interior, implicitly obedient to Lenin. Being wary of me, my fellow delegates chose Joaquin Maurin to speak on behalf of the CNT delegation. Maurin reported back on their first audience. At the sight of the list of the prisoners whose release was being sought, Dzerzhinsky blanched, then went red with fury, arguing that these men were counterrevolutionaries in cahoots with the White generals: he accused them of having derailed trainloads of Red Army troops and of being responsible for the deaths of thousands of soldiers, in the Ukraine especially.

We were unable to probe any further into what had happened and Maurin and his friends

among our delegation won the day. Not that I gave up, any more, indeed, than a number of delegates of other nationalities did, and we pressed on with our lobbying. Not a single piece of evidence had been adduced to back Dzerzhinsky's claims, not so much as one criminal indictment. No indictment, no trial, no judges, let alone defense lawyers: there was none of that. Whatever the "people's commissar," whose job it was to defend the regime, might have said, this was a case of arbitrary imprisonment. We persisted. As my fellow delegates took the line that it was hopeless and banished the matter from their minds, they at last left it to me to take formal charge of it. The people's commissar for Public Education, Lunacharsky, visibly discomfited by the role he was forced to play in the name of party discipline, was despatched to us on two occasions but, being unable to take any decisions, he merely acted as an intermediary, receiving and passing on requests and responses. After Lunacharsky, they sent us Ulrikh, a significant and mysterious bigwig from the prosecution office. This again was a waste of time and the weeks slipped by. They were assuredly determined to wear us down.

I regularly went to see Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Through their two rooms paraded the wives whose spouses were imprisoned. Worried and distraught, they sometimes broke down in tears. And I listened to the odyssey, the lives of these men who had fallen victim to the so-called socialist State.



Victor Serge himself, who from time to time sincerely kept a foot in both camps, and carried on writing articles in the western press in favor of the regime, filled me in on their background. Maximoff was an anarcho-syndicalist theoretician of stature, incapable of perpetrating an act of anti-soviet sabotage. Yartchuk was the erstwhile secretary of the soviet in Kronstadt where Zinoviev had sought refuge when Kerensky ordered him arrested. Voline, the bote noire of government circles, was an anarcho-syndicalist theoretician, a lecturer, a gifted writer who had been living in exile at the time of the revolution against tsarism. Such and such was now in prison, someone else banished to Siberia. And all of these authentic revolutionaries were now languishing in jails which some of them, such as Maria Spiridonova, had occupied years earlier.

We sought permission to visit them and although we were delegates from trade union organizations which it was hoped to win over, permission was denied. I remember that in the Spain of Alfonso XIII, where I had come from, and during one of the most fearful repressions that country ever experienced, aside from the Franco era, we were still able to visit prisoners, unless they were being held in secret. In the Modelo prison in Valencia and in the one in Barcelona, my friends had had no difficulty in seeing me. They had only to ask for me during visiting hours and the warders would escort me down to the visiting room. In

the villages of Spain through which I passed later I was always able to visit my imprisoned comrades. In the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky, this was impossible. Most of the delegates did not press the matter. Not knowing what else to do. But I stuck to my guns. Accusations were not enough. We were offered no proof and there were too many valid challenges contradicting the authorities' allegations.

I was intent upon having proof. Among the female comrades whom I met at Emma Goldman's place was Olga Maximoff<sup>6</sup>, a tiny, thirty year old brunette of average height, rained by her ordeals. She had met her spouse while a deportee in Siberia under tsarism, his circumstances being the same. She suggested to me that I enter the Butyrky prison the next day to speak with our comrades. I would go in with her and other prisoners' wives and would be supplied with Russian papers to get me past the guards. I might fail, but I agreed to chance it. The following day, off I went with four comrades who were traveling as a party. Their bare feet slipped upon the small cobbles and gravel of the city streets. Two of them carried, hanging from their shoulders, a huge canvas bag containing a few provisions obtained with great difficulty. The youngest of them, Yartchuk's wife, had fought on the barricades in Petrograd and Moscow, in order to bring down, first, tsarism and then the Kerensky government.

At the entrance to the prison, there was a female sentry on duty. She knew my female comrades and barely glanced at their visiting permits. I handed her my papers without uttering a word and she returned them to me with the comment "Da," to which I responded with a smile. Two of the women engaged her in conversation about something while I wandered off with the others. We crossed a courtyard and entered the visiting room. The comrades called out the names of the prisoners whom they wished to see, Voline included. The gap between the visitors and the inmates was no bar to almost direct contact, and no member of staff, or policeman, listened in on the conversations, which, for me, was confirmation that this was a case of preventive detention, with no inquiry and no court proceedings involved.

In came the prisoners. "This is Gaston Leval," one of the women told Voline, a man of average height, around forty five years of age, wearing a black beard and with the splendid head of a Jewish intellectual. My name was known to him because he had heard tell of me. Effusively, he shook my hand, speaking to me in very correct French. Then, at the risk of startling him and looking a bit ridiculous, but because I was keen to conduct an utterly impartial investigation, I asked him to brief me in detail about what he had been up to since his return to Russia.

Over an hour or an hour and a half, with painstaking precision, while I made notes, Voline explained his work as a propagandist and fighter. After a tour of the prison system, Voline had wound up in Butyrky. He related his odyssey to me in a very detailed manner, rehearsing the facts, dates, names, towns and villages. And, along with the rest of the prisoners, he demanded a public trial. (. . .) I returned to the Lux Hotel, determined to carry on the campaign to release my comrades. But by the time the congress of the Red International of Labor Unions opened, we had not moved forward by a single concession, promise or hope. On five or six occasions already we had met with delegates from the Soviet authorities and on every occasion relations had been broken off or suspended without result. They were sticking to the tactics of attrition.

Then the comrades in the Butyrky embarked upon a hunger strike. They smuggled out a manifesto written in French in which they asked syndicalist delegates to lobby the Russian authorities on behalf of their release and freedom of thought and expression for all revolutionaries. But the disheartened delegates to whom they appealed merely deplored the strike which was an embarrassment to them. Three, four and five days passed. I could do nothing at the congress. Marginalized by my fellow-delegates and unused as I was on account of the clandestine activity to which I had been

condemned thus far to maneuvers and counter-maneuvers, commissions and backstairs lobbying, I was reduced to inactivity and powerlessness. Although more coherent and, for the most part, oppositionist, the French delegation was likewise unable to do much more. Our comrades pressed on with their hunger strike. We were told that in Orel and in other towns whose names I cannot now recall, there were similar strikes and that two or three of the strikers had perished. Which was not impossible, for all of Russia's jails were bulging with prisoners who had been prompted to protest by the international congresses, in the hope that their voices might reach beyond the borders of Bolshevik Russia. What else was there for them to do?

Five days, six days, seven days. One or two delegates made isolated efforts but all to no avail. At Emma Goldman's and Alexander Berkman's apartments could I still see our comrades' womenfolk, distraught and tormented and occasionally in tears in that news of executions might arrive at any time. Olga Maximoff arrived to tackle me again at the congress and, knowing no French, she tugged at my jacket while repeating in tones of supplication and with pleading eyes that I can still hear and see; "Comrade Leval, Comrade Leval!" Seven days, eight days, nine days! We were distraught, not knowing where to turn. And I found the opposition delegates powerless and disheartened. Others, powerless to do anything, even took our

comrades to task for having exploited their presence and placed them in an uncomfortable position.

Finally, on the eleventh day, after one final plea from dear, good Olga Maximoff, I managed to persuade two or three delegations at the congress to make a supreme effort. Others followed suit. Shortly afterwards around fifteen of us set off for the Kremlin. We were off to speak with the master of Russia, Lenin. Arriving outside one of the perimeter gates at the Kremlin, we ran into the guards. One of us, Michel Kneller, a Russian-speaker, explained our desire to see "tovaritch" Lenin. Note was taken of our names and of the foreign delegations represented. Telephone calls, waiting. After a quarter of an hour, a positive response. Two troopers, Chekists no doubt, escorted us through the maze of streets. We passed palaces and sumptuous mansions and chapels in the ancient residence of Rurik. Outside the building where Lenin was, we bumped into another guard who refused to let us proceed any further. We explained who we were. But he had had no orders.

We had to write another note re-applying for an audience with comrade Lenin, who sent us, in reply, another note in rather flawed French, asking us to be specific as to the object of our visit and apologizing for the fact that he could not receive us, being swamped with work. We scribbled a further note, signed by every one

of us in turn. We represented around ten foreign trade union organizations, which must have counted for something in the reckonings of the tactician who missed nothing. And back came the Chekist trooper, bearing, at last, one last note from Lenin, who agreed to see us. We were shown up on to the first floor, into a room where we waited for a long time, curious and on edge. Then a door opened behind us and Lenin appeared, quite small, with a Mongoloid face, eyes squinting and grinning in icy irony. One by one, he shook hands with us all, asking our name and the delegation to which we belonged. And while he questioned us, and we answered, he fixed us in his amused, penetrating gaze with disconcerting indifference.

Then he invited us to go through to an adjoining room and be seated around a huge rectangular table. He took his own seat. Tom Mann, the English trade union delegate and the most prominent figure among us, sat near him and spelled out, in English, the purpose of our visit. We had made up our minds to seek, not just the release of our comrades jailed in the Butyrky, but of all left-wing revolutionaries. In English, Lenin answered our spokesman who heard him out attentively, his face all intelligence, smiling and ruddy: in the end, seemingly convinced, he nodded his agreement. Whereupon the master of the Kremlin translated his reply into French. He reiterated the charges made by Dzerzhinsky, announcing that our overtures were out of

place. Those in prison were not true anarchists nor idealists, just bandits abusing our good intentions. The evidence for this was that there were anarchists, real ones, collaborating with the Bolsheviks and holding official positions. And he came to Voline who, with Makhno, has had trains derailed in the Ukraine and butchered thousands of Red Army soldiers and allied himself with the White general, Denikin, against the Bolsheviks." On this particular matter, I was in possession of rather detailed information. Among other things, the testimony of one Red Army general who had been in the Ukraine when these things had happened and who had talked at length with our delegation in one of the rooms at the Lux Hotel. He had been categorical: "Makhno has never allied himself with the Whites against us. At times, he fought the Whites and us simultaneously, but it cannot be said that he was in cahoots with the Whites." I remember too that Voline had been in charge of propaganda and cultural affairs in districts recaptured from the Austro-Hungarian armies and counterrevolutionary generals and not of directing military operations. And if Makhno had fought the Red army, it was because Trotsky had attacked the Ukrainian revolutionary forces unwilling to kowtow to Bolshevik despotism. For, when all was said and done, the Communist Party was one of the revolutionary parties and the others had a right to defend themselves against its attempts to ride roughshod over everyone.



So I interrupted Lenin, not abruptly but clearly and firmly. I had, I told him, spoken with Voline in the Butyrky prison "to which I had gained access perfectly legally, I might add" (Lenin made a gesture indicating "very well, I do not doubt it"). And I repeated, item by item, all that I knew of my imprisoned comrade's activities. I talked for a quarter of an hour, citing dates, facts and names. Lenin heard me out attentively, eyes squinting and with a long face which made him look somewhat rat-like, staring at me curiously.

Once I had finished, he was visibly rattled. But, too cute to show that he had been beaten, he picked his words, and crafted his phrases and circumlocution to buy time to recover: Yes, obviously. . . if things are as you say, that is a horse of a different color. . . I must seek additional information about Voline. . . I was not aware of these very important details. . . . He carried on falteringly, for the point as far as he was concerned was not to give ground. I had bushwhacked the fellow! Finally, he improvised: As you appreciate, today we face a very special situation. Folk who yesterday were revolutionaries have become counterrevolutionaries and we are compelled to fight them. Look at Plekhanov, the founding father of socialism in Russia. To one of our comrades who was leaving Switzerland, bound for Russia, he said: "This vermin must be crushed!" The Bolshevik State has to struggle against these new enemies. The State is a machine for which we are answerable and we

cannot allow its operation to be frustrated. Voline is highly intelligent, which makes him all the more dangerous and we must take the most strenuous steps against him. After all, along with Makhno he has played along with the White generals Denikin and Koltchak by having Red Army troop trains derailed.

The other delegates were less well informed than me and did not quibble. For they were au fait with certain things and had learned that one could not speak up without risking assassination at the hands of "White Guards" on the border. Even so, they spoke up about the matter of freedom of expression for all revolutionary denominations and for the freeing of all political prisoners, across the board. While they were talking, Lenin, just as he had done with Tom Mann, and as he had done while I was speaking, stared hard at them, ever ironic, as if entertained, moving his bald head and little beard up and down, up and down. Or else, with his right cheek resting on his hand, he seemed absorbed in examination of the ceiling. So much so that, disconcerted and realizing that it was pointless to proceed, the champion of freedom and humanity simply dried up or stopped short.

The audience lasted for around three quarters of an hour, at the end of which time Lenin announced that rights for the revolutionary opposition were out of the question. The comrades in the Politburo would certainly refuse that. All that he could do was look into

the cases of the hunger strikers, but it was not up to him to decide. That was a matter for the Politburo upon which he could not, in any case, impose his view, for decisions were made democratically by a majority. Lenin lied, and we pretended to swallow his lies in order to avoid a brutal falling-out. There was playacting on both sides. And, at his request, I drew up a note in which we called upon "Comrade Lenin" to present to the Politburo our request that those on hunger strike in the Butyrky prison be released. Just them. Lenin promised to let us have the answer the next day, at ten o'clock, in the room of the French delegate Sirolle. And we parted after a hand-shake, accompanied by a final probing and ironic stare.

The following day, the answer did not come until noon, which was not a good omen. Signed, not by Lenin but by Trotsky, who had the candor to acknowledge his responsibilities. A categorical refusal to free the hunger strikers. The sole firm suggestion? That they be expelled from Russia. Followed by a lecture on the necessity of learning to take account of revolutionary responsibilities and not accede to superficial sentiments when the higher interests of the revolution were at stake.

What could we do other than accept? We could not resume our overtures to high ranking persons already approached, who would doubtless not even have agreed to receive us. And that could have backfired on our

comrades to whom we passed on the solution that had been offered. On the positive side, they would get out of prison. They would be expelled from their own country quite a symbol. For the other prisoners, the other parties, we could do nothing now. The congress finished a few days later. Delegates to'ed and fro'ed in the streets of Moscow. We were invited to attend theater shows. At the opera, Chalyapin sang for us: ballets were mounted for us, and there were splendid gymnastic displays on the banks of the Moskva. Few delegates took notes. But two weeks had passed and our comrades were still in prison in spite of the deal signed between the delegates and Lunacharsky, stipulating that they were to be freed and expelled from Russia. From the Russia from which some of them had had to flee in tsarist times, and where they had returned so brimful of hope when the revolution broke out. We did not trust the word of the Bolshevik leadership with whose dishonesty we were familiar and we wondered whether they were not waiting for us to leave in order to keep our comrades, who were also impatient, behind bars.

But Trotsky had it announced to the French delegation that he would one evening call to Irold's room on a friendly visit. The Italian and Spanish syndicalists were alerted and we decided to avail of the occasion to press for details about the implementation of the agreement signed. A very handsome, intelligent, energetic and supercilious man,

Trotsky showed up took a seat in our midst and spoke in French about various aspects of the fight being waged against the White generals and the economic straits in which the new Russia found itself. Regarding bureaucracy, which we thought a frightful danger, he said that, if he could, he would load whole ships with bureaucrats and sink them in the sea without hesitation. But the problem was not that simple. He regretted that and could not prevent it.

Other matters were broached including the revolutionary movement in France, the policy of the CGT and the treachery of the western trade union leaders. We were in all but complete agreement, for Trotsky charmed us with his persuasive arguments and the explanations he offered. But deep-down, we were waiting for an opening to raise the topic dearest to our hearts and it seemed that he had guessed as much, for he talked unendingly of the most diverse matters. Just as he was about to leave, we raised what he assuredly had been hoping to avoid. Whereupon he raised his eye-brows, and half-smiling, half in anger, he began by saying that it might be better not to spoil this interview by broaching our intervention on behalf of the imprisoned

Russian anarchists, which was not the best thing that we had done in Russia, that we ought to brag about it to our country's workers when we got home, that we had been deceived and that our primary duty ought to have been

trust in the Soviet government. Then, changing tone and concealing his wrath from the delegates whose smiles were visibly false, he assured us that his promise would be honored. That seemed too vague. And with the support of Arlandis, I asked when it would be honored, when our comrades would get out of prison. Then I watched as Trotsky drew himself up to his full height, inflated his chest, raising his arms while clenching his fists and, in an explosion of rage, asked me, in a near scream: Who are you to ask me, and I don't know you, when I am going to implement the decisions I have made?

Then, seizing me by the lapels of my jacket, he added, in the same tone: We Bolsheviks have made our revolution, and what have you done? It is not your place to give us orders, and we have nothing to learn from you! What other phrases he uttered I cannot recall now. I was so startled, surprised and dumbfounded by this outburst that, right then and there, I could not think of an answer. I will even admit that I felt the blood drain from my face. Then, I calmly told him: No need to answer in that tone, comrade Trotsky. We are quite within our rights to ask you a question! The other delegates stepped in, trying to calm him down. Trotsky reiterated that he would honor his word. Before I left, I bade good-bye to many comrades still at large, all of whom were to perish in the jails or isolators that prefigured the concentration camps. I shook hands with Voline and his friends, freed from the Butyrky

prison at last and departed for Berlin, via Riga. The revolution which had loomed after the world-wide slaughter like the dawn of liberation for the international proletariat and the whole of mankind now appeared to us as one of the deadliest threats to the future of the peoples. The methodical police terror, the Party's tightening grip upon the whole of social life, the systematic annihilation of all non-Bolshevik currents, the no less systematic extermination of all revolutionaries who thought along lines different from those of the new masters, and indeed the eradication of every hint of dissent within the Party all proved that we were on the road to a new despotism that was not merely political but also intellectual, mental and moral, reminiscent of the darkest days of the Middle Ages.

#### Notes to Anarchists Behind Bars (Summer 1921)

1. Joaquin Maurin (born 1897), the founder, successively, of the Communist Federation of Catalonia, then, after his break with Moscow, of the Worker and Peasant Bloc (1931) and then of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification-POUM (1935: both teacher and trade union activist with the CNT: spent fifteen years in prison under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and then under Franco: moved to the United States.

2. Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877-1926), of aristocratic extraction, a Lithuanian Social Democrat from 1895, arrested and convicted several times, freed from prison by the 1917 Revolution: founded the political police, the Cheka (later the GPU); died of a heart attack.

3. Anatol Lunacharsky (1873-1933) writer and literary critic. Social Democrat from 1898, turned Bolshevik in 1903, Commissar for Education from 1917 to 1929.

4. Ulrikh was to be shot during the Stalinist purges.

5. Maria Spiridonova (born 1889), active terrorist, sentenced to death for the execution of a provincial governor, a sentence commuted to life imprisonment: raped and tortured while being transferred to Siberia: after February 1917, leader of the Left Social Revolutionaries: implicated in their rebellion in July 1918: imprisoned from 1919 or 1920: never released thereafter.

6. Olga Maximoff, wife of G.P. Maximoff.

7. Michel Kneller, a French activist who, in 1919, fired revolver shots at the Elysee Palace in protest at the blockade on soviet Russia: delegate from the French CCT to the foundation congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. A Communist sympathizer



with syndicalist leanings: subsequently became a left-wing "abundancist."

8. Rurik, founder of the Russian Empire, died in 879.

9. Tom Mann (1856-1941) English mechanic, secretary of the Independent Labor Party in 1894: joined the American revolutionary syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW): took part in the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1921.

10. Henri Sirolle (born 1886) joint secretary of the Rail Federation in 1920: a versatile anarcho-syndicalist: at the first congress of the CCTU in Saint-Etienne in July 1922, reporting on his experiences as a delegate in Moscow in 1921, he told how, at an audience with Lenin, the latter had shown him a few files on anarchists and that he, Sirolle, had concluded from these. . . that they deserved to die! Ended up in charge of Marshal Petain's Secours National.

11. One of the Spanish trade union delegates accompanying Gaston Leval.

# COLLECTIVES IN SPAIN

GASTON LEVAL

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We are reproducing an abridged version of the first part of Gaston Leval's pamphlet "Social Reconstruction in Spain," which was published by Freedom Press in **1938**, but which has since gone out of print. Many readers of "War Commentary" have expressed a desire for the reproduction in some form of the contents of this excellent pamphlet.

## COLLECTIVES IN SPAIN

**INDUSTRIAL** socialization was the first undertaking of the Spanish Revolution, particularly in Barcelona. But obstacles were created from the beginning, which resulted in preventing these experiments from being

developed to their logical end. The war was the principal handicap.

But on the other hand, the desire for a complete social revolution was too deep, too rooted in the minds of the working masses for such a consideration to check all the workers. There was another factor to be remembered, namely that a large proportion of employers, directors and shareholders were either self declared fascists or fascist sympathisers, who longed for a Franco triumph.

Many of these employers fled as soon as they saw that the anti-fascists, inspired by the men of the F.A.I. and the C.N.T.1 had triumphed. Others were arrested. It was inevitable that the factories and workshops owned by these should be seized and run by the workers. This is in fact what the workers did.

To the above should be added, the suspect employers who, in order to defend their interests, were much more in sympathy with the fascists than with the anti-fascists. One did not expect these men to be eager to construct tanks, aeroplanes, rifles and munitions which were essential for the triumph of those who were fighting their bosom friends. They were not going to do all in their power to develop economic production with the intensity required to guarantee the daily life of anti-fascist Spain. The workers understood this instinctively, and established in almost all workshops, control committees, which had as

their aim to keep a watch on the progress in production, and to keep a check on the financial position of the owner of each establishment.

In numerous cases, control was quickly passed from the control committee, to the Directive committee, in which the employer was drawn in with the workers and paid the same wage. A number of factories and workshops in Catalonia passed in this way into the hands of the workers who were engaged in them.

### COLLECTIVISATION DECREE.

It was in view of these facts that the Generalitat--the Government of Catalonia--published the Decree of Collectivization in October, 1936. According to this decree, the workers were allowed to take over all factories which employed 100 or more workers, besides those with less than 100 workers whose owners were officially recognised as fascists.

The decree which apparently answered the needs of the Catalan workers, and which was received with great joy by the majority of them, was in reality a filching of Socialization, for the following reasons:

Firstly. The percentage of workers in factories employing less than 100 was greater than that of the factories employing more than 100 workers; which meant that the greater number

of workers were, condemned to remain under the system of owner's exploitation.

Secondly. The workers were prevented from being the real masters of the means of production, for the administrative committees which they had to form had their ramifications in the Ministry of Economy, to which they had to give an account of their activities. This completely eliminated the syndicates in the work of Social reconstruction, and protected a section of the small employers, thus creating a dualism which sooner or later would have to end in the defeat of one of the two parties. But it was a temporary obstacle which the conscientious, responsible elements hoped to settle later.

Thirdly. A system which retained private commerce in its entirety obliged each workshop, and each factory to sell that which it produced, independently. The workers then, were competing with one another; were destroying the morale and feeling of solidarity existing among them, and were forced into competition which increased in proportion to the rate at which the economic difficulties became more acute.

The more conscious militant workers were well aware of the dangers, and their reaction was not long in expressing itself. Firstly through their press and by word of mouth, later by Union Meetings. It was understood that if the Unions did not take production into their own

hands, and did not eliminate the workers' bureaucracy which had been created by the Collectivization decree, everything accomplished would be invalidated by this irreparable moral and material blow.

Slowly, struggling against the authorities, the Unions from the majority of Industrial centres in Catalonia strove to take over the control of the "collectivized" factories and workshops. They partially succeeded. But the partial triumph was the result of many long months of agitation, and during that time, the non-revolutionary forces had eliminated the C.N.T. and the Largo Caballero section from power. The forces opposing Socialization and the reactionary counter-offensive became more powerful. On the whole one can state that the action of the Unions was successful. Unfortunately the difficulties were multiplying. When real industrial Socialization was beginning, the lack of raw materials was becoming more acute. The textile industry lacked wool and cotton. The metallurgical workshops lacked steel and the carpenter's shops, timber. And, as if these difficulties were not a sufficiently great problem, the policy of the Government made things even worse.

The Government "took control of the raw material." It was a means of depriving the syndicates of power and of sabotaging their work. Then it "nationalized" the greater part of the industries. This was a pretext to take

possession of those which the workers had put into action, and to destroy socialization.

However, everything did not develop as I have just described. Fortunately a few syndicates in Catalonia took the activities of their respective industries into their own hands from the beginning, disregarding Government orders. And in certain towns outside Catalonia, Socialization was put into practice immediately and has shown amazing results.

## BARCELONA

In Barcelona, the Sanitary Syndicate, the Urban Transport, the Water and Gas Syndicates as well as the Public Amusements Syndicate have directed work themselves. The first named and the last were created after the Revolution. They have nevertheless accomplished great work. The Sanitary Syndicate spread throughout Catalonia and organized medical service in such a way that every village had its doctor.

The railways in Catalonia are an eloquent example of what the workers would have done had they not been paralysed by the concessions made to the bourgeoisie. The three main lines which belonged to three foreign companies constantly competing with one another, were amalgamated to form one company and recently were directed by a central committee of the U.G.T. (General

Workers' Union--Socialist) and C.N.T. made up of twelve comrades. There were very few engineers, for most of them were foreigners and had returned to their respective countries. Nevertheless wonderful results were achieved.

### GRANOLLERS

Apart from Barcelona, one can give noteworthy cases of organization. Take the small town of Granollers for instance. Everything was Socialized by the Syndicates and the Municipality. And everything worked perfectly. The small workshops disappeared--this took place in hundreds of localities where the workers took over production--and redistribution was rapidly assured by the Municipal cooperatives; small business concerns were at first controlled, then eliminated, and the tradespeople given an occupation, either in the co-operatives or in other trades.

### CASTELLON

If we travel southwards along the Mediterranean on coast we reach Castellon. Little or nothing has been said about this town, in spite of the fact that since October, 1936, the metallurgical industry had been entirely in the hands of the syndicates. The other industries were in the process of being socialized in a similar way. And yet in this



town there was no revolutionary syndicalist tradition, but the workers were not lacking in common sense and were deeply conscious of their responsibilities.

### ALCOY

If we take Alcoy in the Province of Alicante, we have an even more typical example. The workers have long been well organized and no mobilization decree was necessary for the militants. They quickly took over the factories and workshops and organized production in a new way.

Each industry is centralized in the Syndical Administrative Committee. This committee is divided into as many sections as there are principal industries. When an order is received by the Sales Section it is passed on to the production section whose task it is to decide which workshops are best equipped to produce the required articles. Whilst settling this question they order the required raw materials from the corresponding section. The latter gives instructions to the shops to supply the materials and finally, the Buying Section receives details of the transaction so that it can replace the material used.

This summary, which, given space, could endlessly be amplified, makes one appreciate the fact that the Spanish Libertarian workers co-ordinate and rationalize production in a

much more satisfactory way than Capitalism had done. And I lay special stress on the disappearance of small unhealthy and costly workshops and factories, besides the correct use of machinery for the work most suited to it. Administrative centralization is one of the most outstanding features. One can thus state that wherever collaboration with political parties has not paralysed the workers, the latter were able, even where their syndicates were of only recent formation, to organize production and public services in a highly satisfactory way. There remains to be described the role played by the workers themselves in the administration and industrial management.

The industrial administrative committee is neither an autonomous nor infallible organization. The syndicate still exists, and its central commission controls the ensemble of activities. It is nominated by the general assembly of syndicated workers and has delegates direct from the factories and workshops so as never to lose contact with the workers. In the work shops and factories exist committees elected by an assembly of workers gathered together on the spot. These committees are responsible for the application of instructions received as regards the conduct of work. In their turn they communicate their observations to the central syndical commission. And at assemblies resolutions are passed concerning both the daily work in the

factories and work of the administrative committee.

We are not therefore facing an administrative dictatorship, but rather a functional democracy, in which all specialized works play their roles which have been settled after general examination by the assembly.

### AGRARIAN SOCIALIZATION

BUT it is in agrarian Socialization that one must look for the the best example of Social achievement.

This socialization did not take place simultaneously and completely everywhere at the same time. It was commenced in Aragon, inspired by the Libertarians, then gained ground in Levant and that part of Andalucia which remained in our hands. Finally it extended to the South of Catalonia and in Castille.

The agrarian revolution has inaugurated the practice of Libertarian right. And it has done it with such results that the Anarchist theorists themselves, those who had always defended the concepts now applied, were amazed, and will never forget the beautiful dream through which they lived.

Let us add that deep social feelings, which characterize the Spanish peasant, were required to put these ideas into practice.

## ARAGON

In about three months, most of the villages of Aragon, some of which were wrested from Fascist hands by the columns led by Durruti and other "undisciplined" guerillas, organized agrarian collectives. One must not confuse the industrial "collectives" carried out under the aegis of the decree mentioned earlier on, and under instructions dictated by the Catalan Government, with those of the peasants. This word "collectives" describes two quite different things.

The mechanism of the formation of the Aragonese collectives, has been generally the same. After having overcome the local authorities when they were fascist, or after having replaced them by Anti-fascist or Revolutionary committees when they were not, an assembly was summoned for all the inhabitants of the locality to decide on their line of action.

One of the first steps was to gather in the crop not only in the fields of the small landowners who still remained, but, what was even more important, also, on the estates of the large landowners all of whom were conservatives and rural "caciques" or chiefs. Groups were

organized to reap and thresh the wheat which belonged to these large landowners. Collective work began spontaneously. Then as this wheat could not be given to anyone in particular without being unfair to all it was put under the control of a local committee, for the use of all the inhabitants, either for consumption or for the purpose of exchange for manufactured goods, such as clothes, boots, etc., for those who were most in need.

It was necessary, afterwards, to work the lands of the large landowners. They were generally the most extensive and fertile in the region. The question was again raised before the village assembly. It was then that the "collectivity" if not already definitely constituted--often this had been done at the first meeting--was definitely established.

A delegate for agriculture and stock breeding was nominated (or one for each of these activities when breeding was extensively carried on), one delegate each for local distribution, exchanges, public works, hygiene and education and revolutionary defence. Sometimes there were more; on other occasions less.

Workers groups were then formed. These groups generally were divided into the number of zones into which the municipal territory had been divided, so as more easily to include all kinds of work. The number of zones depends not only on the extent of the land but also on

the topographical lie of the land, which in Spain is generally mountainous.

Each group of workers names its delegate. The delegates meet every two days or every week with the councillor of agriculture and stock breeding, so as to co-ordinate all the different activities.

They decide for instance, whether certain fields should be ploughed, or whether they should attend to the wheat or the vines; or to prune the olive trees and other fruit trees; or to plant potatoes or sow beetroots, etc. According to the urgency and the importance of the work, groups are chosen to attend to it, and go, when necessary, from one zone to another.

In this new organization, small property has almost completely disappeared. In Aragon 75 per cent. of small proprietors have voluntarily adhered to the new order of things. Those who refused have been respected. It is untrue to say that those who took part in the collectives were forced to do so. One cannot stress this point too strongly in face of the calumnies which have been directed against the collectives on this point. It is so far from the truth that the agrarian collectivity has brought into force, everywhere, a special current account for small proprietors and has printed consumers' tickets specially for them, so as to assure for them the industrial products they

require, in the same way as they do for the "collectivists".

In this transformation of property, one must put special stress on the practical sense and psychological finesse of the organizers who in almost all the villages have conceded or given to each family a bit of ground on which each peasant cultivates, for his own use, the vegetables which he prefers in the way he prefers. Their individual initiative can thereby be developed and satisfied.

### NEW METHODS OF CULTIVATION

Collective work has made it possible to achieve in agriculture as well as in industry, a rationalization which was impossible under the régime of small land ownership and even under that of big landed properties. Tractors and other machinery are used v;here they are most necessary. Forgotten are the days when the means or production remained unused in the barns of the rich, whilst the poor peasants worked the land with roman ploughs drawn by worn out donkeys and mules! Beasts of burden are equally used on work to which they are most suited. All the strong mules do the hard work whilst the weaker ones are put on less arduous tasks.

On the other hand, better quality seeds are used. This was rendered possible by being able to buy up large stocks, which the small

peasant could not afford to do in the past. Potato seeds come from Ireland and selected wheat seeds only are used. Chemical fertilizers have also been used. As modern machinery properly used--tractors and modern ploughs were obtained by exchange or bought directly from abroad--permits the soil to be more deeply worked, these seeds have produced a yield per hectare far superior to that which would have been obtained under the conditions which existed during previous years.

These new methods have also made it possible to increase the acreage sown. In Aragon my research on the spot permits me to affirm that generally speaking the increase in wheat crop has reached an average of 30 per cent. An increase in yield, though in a smaller proportion has been obtained for other cereals, potatoes, sugar beet, lucerne, etc.

#### FAMILY WAGE

This latter fact is of utmost importance. It is the first time in modern society that the anarchist principle "to each according to his needs," has been practiced. It has been applied in two ways: without money in many villages in Aragon and by a local money in others, and in the greater part of collectives established in other regions. The family wage is paid with this money and it varies according to the number of members in each family. A



household in which the man and his wife both work because they have no children receives, for the sake of argument, say 5 pesetas a day. Another household in which only the man works, as his wife has to care for two, three or four children, receives six, seven or eight pesetas respectively. It is the "needs" and not only the "production" taken in the strictly economic sense which control the wage scale or that of the distribution of products where wages do not exist.

## MUTUAL AID

This principal of justice is continually extended. It does away with charity and begging and the special budgets for the indigent. There are no more destitutes. Those who work do so for others in the same way as others will work to help them and their children later on.

But this mutual add extends beyond the village. Before the Fascist invaders destroyed the Aragon collectives, the cantonal federations did all in their power to counteract the injustices of nature by obtaining for the less favoured villages the machinery, mules, seed, etc.... which were to help them increase the yield of their land. These implements were obtained through the intermediary of the Federation which undertook the delivery of the produce of twenty, thirty, forty or even fifty localities and asked in their name, for the

industrial and stock breeding centres, for the products which they required.

All I have said in this synopsis should be sufficient for an understanding of the moral side of the revolution in Spain and justifies my statement, namely, that never has anything similar been achieved in the history of civilized societies. But there are other aspects which deserve a little of our attention.

### EDUCATION

LET us take education as an example. Wherever the revolution has been far reaching, serious efforts in this direction are noted.

Schools have been created in convents and in seminaries which generally were the best buildings. They can be counted by the thousand. Each of the five hundred collectives in Levant has its own school, generally in beautiful surroundings, in orange groves or at the foot of snow covered mountains.

In Aragon, Catalonia and Castille, everywhere one notices the same attention to education. Never before had such a great stride forward been made in the history of Spain.

Wherever the Government and the State have not been able to make themselves felt, medical aid has been socialized too, that is to say, put at everyone's disposal. The doctor looks after

all sick people. The Collective pays him. The latter also provides all medicines, and sends the more seriously affected -patients to the cities' hospitals or sanatoriums. Small dispensaries have been set up in certain villages and are maintained by the canton's efforts. No one is allowed to die or sicken for lack of care and attention.

In almost all the collectivized villages of Aragon "Homes for the Aged" were founded to which came the old people of both sexes who were without family. The best houses were chosen for them, they were looked after by young girls chosen for their gaiety and pleasant appearance. No barrack régime, no annoying rules. The old folk came and went as they wished. They still continue in those places where fascist reaction has not triumphed.

But, apart from these examples of integral collectivization, there are examples of partial success which are worth reporting. In many places our comrades have entered the municipality and have succeeded in putting into practice appreciable reforms, such as the semi-municipalization of medical aid, which places at the disposal of all inhabitants the services of doctors, nurses and midwives and pharmaceutical necessities; the improvement of teaching; the municipalization of lodgings. The rent is paid to the municipality, and having need of no other revenue, this eliminates the payment of rates and taxes. One

can understand what this means to the inhabitants who are not rich.

## THE SPANISH REVOLUTION AND HISTORY

I HAVE described on broad lines the new social organization created by the Spanish Revolution. The achievements of the libertarian socialists are a fact, and the excellence of their principles is definitely shown. About three million peasants, men, women and children have succeeded in putting into practice this system of living with immediate results, without the lowering of production which these groupings of new régimes usually produce. At least two million have benefited from the partial achievements. A large section of industry has been successfully directed by the workers' syndicates; these figures must be judged in proportion to the twelve million inhabitants comprising permanent and refugee population in the Spain not under Franco domination. The obstacles met with in the towns are due to the application of a régime invented by governments whether of Catalonia or of Spain.

In this vast experiment, facts, characteristics, experiments, initiative and achievements of all sorts abound. I do not know if one day a historian will make a complete and impartial analysis. This would be desirable. May these pages excite the interest of honest investigators and make clear to the English

speaking proletariat what is to be learnt from this daring experiment in Spain, bleeding and at the point of death, to show the world the path to happiness and dignity.

### FOOTNOTES

1F.A.I.--Federacion Anarquiste de Iberia (Anarchist Federation of Iberia). C.N.T.--Confederacion Nacional de Trabajo (National Confederation of Labour)--Anarcho Syndicalist Union with a membership of 1,700,000.

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